

**Testimony for the Appropriations Committee**  
**February 24, 2022**

My name is [REDACTED] and I live in Fairfield. I am testifying on the Governor's proposed budget H.B. No. 5037 (COMM) AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2023 that unfortunately does not include critical funding for our safety net providers and their employees.

After decades of underfunding, Connecticut's direct support providers are in crisis mode because the effects of the pandemic have impacted their ability to attract and retain direct care workers and other employees. This staff is critically important to the safety and well being of many of Connecticut's residents with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD), including my own family.

The last two years, in particular, have wrecked havoc on our family, especially our son. All the support he—and we—relied on—were stopped during the pandemic. This we understood, but then it seemed to continue longer than necessary. We needed to be back on site at our jobs, and that became very difficult. As things began to open again, we noticed a marked difference in the programming and staff. One large agency that has supported our son for 15 years said they simply did not have the resources or staff and forced him out due to what they said were needs that could not be met. We were then left to figure out how to supervise him and be sure he was engaged and did not descend into depression or more negative behaviors. He has mental health as well as well as IDD, so this was a very serious concern. We needed to adjust what we could do our work schedules, while dealing with reduced income. Our young adult daughter, the only family member nearby, helped a lot but now she is moving out of state for school.

In addition, we have been trying for years to utilize our DDS budget to hire direct care workers, and it has become an impossible task. The job is not an easy one, and the rate of pay simply does not match the responsibility or the duties. I have spent untold hours on the phone, emailing agencies, interviewing people all to have them leave after a few weeks or not show up at all on the first day of work. We are then left scrambling, not knowing how to proceed, causing undue stress. My son is in his mid-30s, we are at a time in our lives when most of our friends are retired or thinking about it. We cannot even go out for an afternoon, as we have so reliable support. We did utilize the Respite Centers, and my son enjoyed going there. When it reopened, we did not get a spot, as DDS wants us to use our budget to hire direct care workers. There are simply no people to hire, due to the staffing crisis. This is really not new, but has reached historic proportions due to the easy availability of other jobs that pay more and do not require direct care of a person with a disability. All this time spent meeting our son's needs has come at the expense of our health and family well-being. With a much-needed residential placement a far-off dream, we cannot plan for our future. In a state like Connecticut, this is not acceptable.

We cannot work enough, we cannot plan, we cannot rest, and the toll it has taken on our son is great. He has lost so many people and programs that he liked and relied on, and the agencies are so understaffed they cannot take on anyone new.

Without your help, our state's community service delivery system will continue to shrink and our loved ones will bear the brunt of this loss. We are already experiencing the worst staffing crisis that service providers have ever seen, which has resulted in an inability to resume programs paused during COVID and caused a rebound effect for family caregivers who are unable to return to work and contribute to Connecticut's economy. I ask you to ensure that critically necessary funding of \$150

million is included in this year's budget for the state's non-profit providers. Please add this funding to the budget before this committee. We cannot forget our most vulnerable or the families who love and care for them. Thank you for your consideration.

Fairfield, CT